

finance facilities and services and show how they will provide them within a certain period of time.

- Once urban boundaries are recognized, no city annexations can take place outside the boundaries.
- Comprehensive plans are required to include a process for locating essential public facilities like sewer and water treatment plants. No county or city can rule out these facilities. Transportation facilities of statewide significance and secure community transition facilities are two types of essential public facilities that need to be included.
- The county and the cities in the county are to work with neighboring jurisdictions to identify lands useful for public purposes (like landfills, sewage treatment facilities and schools).
- Every seven years, each city and county with a full set of GMA planning requirements needs to review, and if needed, revise its comprehensive plan and development regulations to make sure they comply with the GMA. The GMA sets a specific deadline for each county and its cities.

STATE AGENCIES HELP LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN GROWTH MANAGEMENT WORK

The state’s main GMA role is to help and empower local governments to design their own programs to fit local needs and opportunities. This approach is consistent with Washington’s long-held tradition of local governance.



The Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce) helps direct state agency efforts in carrying out the GMA. Other state agencies provide information and assistance to help cities and counties develop their local comprehensive plans and development patterns. They also review draft plans and regulations.

Under the GMA, state agencies are required to comply with adopted county-wide planning policies, comprehensive plans and development regulations of cities and counties.

THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT HEARINGS BOARD HEAR PETITIONS ON GMA RULES

The growth management hearings board hears petitions on whether state agencies, counties and cities meet the goals and requirements of the GMA and petitions on whether OFM’s population projections should be adjusted. Three regional panels for Eastern Washington, Central Puget Sound (Snohomish, King,

Pierce and Kitsap counties), and Western Washington hear petitions from their areas. Each board member is appointed by the Governor.

The state, counties, cities and any person who takes part in the local government’s planning process can petition the boards. There are some limitations on petitions by the state.

Comprehensive plans and development regulations are considered valid upon adoption. (An exception is the Shorelines Element, which requires the approval of the state Department of Ecology.) A growth management hearings board can decide otherwise only if a petitioner shows that a county or city didn’t correctly interpret or apply the GMA.

Sanctions can be required if a growth management hearings board makes a finding that a county, city or state agency has failed to comply with a board order and submits a recommendation to impose sanctions to the Governor. The Governor may, without prior hearings board review, impose sanctions for failure to meet a GMA deadline.

Incentives, penalties and sanctions for counties and cities out of compliance with the GMA can be applied through state grants, loans and taxing authority. Sanctions for state agencies can be a withholding of agency allotments.

GMA OFFERS A FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVING PERMIT SYSTEMS

The GMA is the basis for a law passed in 1995 to improve how permits for projects are issued in Washington. The regulatory reform law seeks to make three planning laws – the Growth Management Act (GMA), State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and Shoreline Management Act (SMA) – work together more smoothly. It requires all local governments to combine environmental review and permit review. The number of hearings and appeals are also limited for all local governments.

COMMERCE PROVIDES ESSENTIAL TOOLS FOR MANAGING GROWTH



- Commerce has developed and adopted rules under the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) to help local governments carry out the GMA. The minimum guidelines help counties and cities to select resource lands and critical areas. The guidelines help counties and cities to adopt comprehensive plans and development regulations. The project consistency rule provides guidance on how to analyze project proposals for consistency with GMA plans and regulations.

- Impact fees – a government fee to help pay for the cost of a project – are authorized for public streets and roads, public parks, open space and recreational facilities as well as school facilities and fire facilities that are not part of a fire district. This financing system for off-site improvements is to provide for a balance between impact fees and other sources of public money. Impact fees alone can’t be used to fund systems improvements. Only cities and counties required or choosing to plan under the GMA can impose impact fees.
- An additional 0.25 percent real estate excise tax (money paid by the home or building buyer at the time of the sale) is authorized (without voter approval) for cities and counties that are required to plan. Those choosing to plan under the GMA may levy a tax after voter approval. Money from the tax should be used only as a public contribution to the development of capital facilities, like roads and sewers, which are identified in the capital facilities plan.
- Six counties – King, Clark, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish and Thurston -- and the cities within them fall under the Buildable Lands Program. This is a program to determine if enough land is being provided for future urban growth. They collect annual data to evaluate their growth management plans every five years, including whether they are achieving urban densities within adopted urban growth boundaries.
- Regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs) are authorized as voluntary associations of local governments to conduct regional transportation planning. RTPO grants are available through the Washington State Department of Transportation.



HELP IS AVAILABLE TO CARRY OUT THE GMA

Technical assistance for carrying out the GMA is available to cities and counties from Commerce’s Growth Management Services. For more information go to the web site [www.commerce.wa.gov/growth](http://www.commerce.wa.gov/growth)

You can also call (360) 725-3000 or write to Growth Management Services, Commerce 1011 Plum Street, P.O. Box 42525, Olympia, WA 98504-2525.



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Washington State’s population will add an estimated 2 million people by 2025. This rapid population growth is changing the way we live and work across the state.

The Growth Management Act (GMA) was passed in 1990 to deal with uncoordinated and unplanned growth that posed a threat to the state’s high quality of life.

Citizens and lawmakers saw how population growth and suburban sprawl threatened Washington’s forest and agricultural lands, wetlands and wildlife habitat. Traffic congestion, especially in Western Washington, clogged the highways and polluted the air. Clean drinking water sources were endangered by increasing pollution. Flooding and landslides were becoming frequent events, especially in areas of new development. Schools, sewers and water supplies were straining to keep up with largely unchecked growth.

To fight these problems, the GMA requires all 320 cities and counties in the state to do some planning. It also calls for fast growing counties – and the cities within them – to plan extensively with state goals on:

- Reducing sprawl
- Concentrating urban growth
- Affordable housing
- Economic development
- Open space and recreation
- Regional transportation
- Environmental protection
- Property rights
- Natural resource industries
- Historic lands and buildings
- Timely permitting
- Public facilities and services
- Early and continuous public participation
- Shoreline management

The GMA guides and encourages local governments with a full set of planning

requirements to establish goals, evaluate community assets, write comprehensive plans – and carry out those plans to a future vision through regulations and innovative techniques. The state’s GMA role is to help local governments in these efforts.

Local communities are working to meet GMA requirements. The results are helping change how and where they develop. For example:

- Cities and counties are working together to decide where urban growth should go.
- Communities are revitalizing downtowns with attractive, compact urban development.
- Communities are planning for economic development to draw new businesses without endangering the environment.
- Open space and recreational opportunities are being improved.
- Transportation policies are being reviewed for better ways to handle congestion and find alternatives to the single-occupancy vehicle.
- Farm and forest lands are being designated and kept in production.
- Historic buildings are being preserved.
- Local communities are using more efficient ways to plan for public services like sewer and water for growing populations.
- Citizens are fully participating in planning for the future of their communities.
- Environmental review is being combined with planning efforts.

**SOME COUNTIES AND CITIES ARE REQUIRED TO FULLY PLAN UNDER THE GMA; OTHERS CHOOSE TO MEET THE ACT’S GOALS**

Any county (including cities within the county) should plan fully under the GMA if it has the following:

1. Both a population of 50,000 or more and a population increase of 10 percent or more over the last 10 years. In 1995 the percentage of population increased to 17 percent; or,
2. A population increase of more than 20 percent for the last 10 years, regardless of current population.

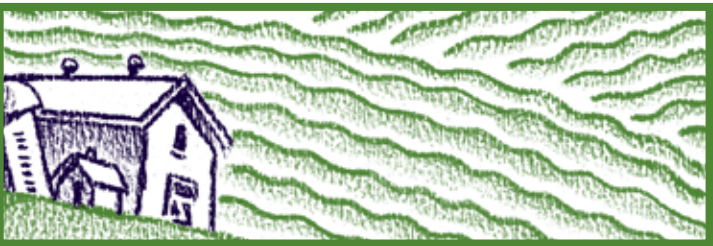
In the remaining counties, a majority vote by county commissioners triggers an obligation for the county as well as all the cities within that county to plan under the GMA.

Twenty-nine counties – making up about 95 percent of the state’s population -- are currently fully planning under the GMA.

**GMA RESPONSIBILITIES ARE PART OF ALL WASHINGTON’S COMMUNITIES**

The GMA has a set of rules for all counties and cities within their boundaries, including those that do not meet the population requirements and choose not to plan fully under the act. These regulations include:

- Resource lands (forest, agricultural and mineral lands) and critical areas (wetlands, geologically hazardous areas, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, aquifer recharge areas and frequently flooded areas) need to be classified and designated. Designated critical areas need to be protected; resource lands must be conserved.
- Every seven years local governments are to review their work on resource lands and critical areas to make sure they comply with the GMA, including the requirement to include the best available science when designating and protecting critical areas. Each county and the cities within it have a specific deadline for the review.
- All cities and counties with comprehensive plans must make development regulations (zoning, subdivision and other controls) consistent with their comprehensive plans.
- Short plats and subdivisions may be approved only if written findings are made that adequate services are available, or that appropriate provisions are made for the public health, safety and welfare.
- Any building permit application needs to supply evidence of adequate water supply for the intended use.



**ADDITIONAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT RULES FOR FULLY PLANNING CITIES AND COUNTIES**

- Counties, in combination with cities and towns, are required to develop county-wide planning policies. These policies provide a regional framework for counties and cities to give population projections, designate urban growth areas (UGAs), promote the orderly provision of urban services, assure affordable housing and encourage economic development.

- The GMA requires multicounty planning policies be completed for Snohomish, King and Pierce counties. Other counties fully planning under the GMA may complete them.
- Each county and the cities within that county work together to figure out the county’s projected population to each of its urban and rural areas. The Office of Financial Management (OFM) provides each county with a 20-year population projection. OFM is required to review these population projections with counties and cities prior to their adoption. Counties are provided with high, medium and low projections and must choose to plan toward a projection within that range. The middle range represents OFM’s estimate of the most likely population projection for the county.
- Counties, in consultation with their cities, must designate UGAs where urban growth is to be encouraged and outside of which growth should happen only if it is not urban. These UGAs will, at a minimum, include all cities as well as the unincorporated areas needed to hold the 20-year projected population allocation for urban growth. New fully contained communities, master-planned resorts and major industrial developments are new types of urban developments that may be allowed if certain criteria are met. UGAs are to be reevaluated every 10 years based on new OFM population projections that are developed from the most recent U.S. Census figures.

Comprehensive plans provide the framework and policy direction for land use decisions. They are required to contain the following elements:

- Land use
- Transportation
- Housing
- Capital facilities
- Utilities
- Shorelines
- Rural (for counties)

Elements addressing economic development and parks and recreation are also required if state funding is provided. Optional elements include:

- Conservation
- Energy
- Subarea plans (where appropriate)

A local government’s plan needs to be consistent with the county-wide planning policies and the plans of neighboring jurisdictions.

- Local governments need to decide what kinds of facilities and services they are going to provide to support growth. They also need to know how they will